DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 336 UD 031 444

AUTHOR	Wang, Margaret C.; Oates, Jane
TITLE	Fostering Resilience and Learning Success in Schools: The Learning City Program. Spotlight on Student Success. No. 102.
INSTITUTION	Mid-Atlantic Lab. for Student Success, Philadelphia, PA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	[95]
NOTE	4p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success, 9th Floor, Ritter Hall Annex, 13th Street and Cecil B. Moore Ave., Philadelphia, PA, 19122; phone: 800-892-5550; e-mail: lss@vm.temple.edu; http://www.temple.edu/departments/LSS
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; *Delivery Systems; Disadvantaged Youth; Elementary Secondary Education; Models; *Partnerships in Education; *Program Implementation; Shared Resources and Services; Student Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes; *Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS	*Resilience (Personality); Stakeholders

ABSTRACT

The Learning City Program (LCP), based on research at the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities, was developed to promote the radical improvement of learning in city schools by linking schools with other learning environments, including homes, libraries, museums, the workplace, institutions of higher learning, and other public and private sector establishments. Fostering educational resilience through the LCP is supported by a delivery system that provides organizational and professional development support for achieving a high degree of implementation at school and classroom levels. LCP has been implemented at a middle school and elementary school in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) and an elementary school in Houston (Texas). The LCP program focuses on student achievement, patterns of active learning and teaching, and positive attitudes of students and teachers. One of the implications that can be drawn from the work of the LCP so far is that program implementation must be a shared responsibility of all stakeholders at the grassroots level. It is also apparent that programs that work in one city can be models for others. For this reason, ways to share research information and experience must be developed. (Contains five references.) (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Fostering Resilience and Learning Success in Schools: The Learning City Program.

By Margaret Wang and Jane Oates

ED 403 336

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

UD031444

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Spotlight on Student Success

A digest of research from the Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success No. 102

Fostering Resilience and Learning Success in Schools:

The Learning City Program

by
Margaret C. Wang and Jane Oates

OVERVIEW

As Census data from the 1990s showed the U.S. leading the industrialized world in terms of children living in poverty, the nation's attention was drawn to the plight of children and families in a variety of risk circumstances, particularly high-risk circumstances in this nation's inner cities. The quality of life available to these children and families is threatened by a perilous set of modern morbidities that often involve poverty, lack of employment opportunities, disorderly and stressful environments, poor health care, children born to children, and highly fragmented patterns of service. The problem of widespread academic failure, which could cripple the next generation, is sometimes overshadowed by this litany of troubles.

It seems logical to expect that schools in the inner cities would provide a place of refuge and hope for children. To an extent, some do; others valiantly try. But sadly, in the critical matters of basic learning, many schools fail to teach their students, adding only more risks to the increasingly adverse life circumstances in the inner cities. Although schools must remain the primary focus of efforts to improve the capacity for education in the inner cities, significant learning occurs outside the school, and the conditions for learning both in school and out are established at home and in the communities. Thus, the search for answers to the fundamental question of "What conditions are required to cause massive improvement in the learning of children and youth in this nation's inner cities" must embrace families and all elements of the community. It is in this context of uniting resources and expertise of the school, the family, and the community in fostering educational resilience and learning success of inner-city children and youth that the Learning City Program (LCP) was developed, based on a program of research at the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities (CEIC).

The overall goal of the Learning City Program is the radical improvement of learning through linking schools with all other learning environments, including homes, libraries, museums, the workplace, higher learning institutions, and other public and private sector establishments. Education programs conducted in these environments are coordinated with the programs of governmental agencies such as health and social services, housing, and law enforcement to ensure that the social and physical needs of the students and the community are met and that providing quality learning experiences for children and families is a major focus of community revitalization efforts.

At the core of the LCP design is a program of research on fostering educational resilience through building connections among school, family, and community, and over two decades of research and field-based implementation experience of two widely known school programs, the School Development Program and the Adaptive Learning Environments Model.

Implementation of the LCP components is supported by a delivery system that provides organizational and professional development support for achieving a high degree of implementation at the school and classroom levels. Regular and special education teachers and other "specialist" professionals such as school psychologists, speech pathologists, and others work in teams to provide for the diverse needs of individual students, including special education, Chapter 1, and bilingual students, in regular classroom settings.

LCP was initiated three years ago in three inner-city schools—one middle and one elementary school in Philadelphia and one elementary school in Houston. Program implementation has since been extended to three other schools, and plans are being made to link the work of LCP implementation with the Enterprise Community Projects being initiated in the community of one of the LCP implementation schools—a project funded by U.S. Department of Labor as part of the nationwide effort in revitalizing urban and economically disadvantaged rural communities.

HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

The LCP implementation seeks to impact three major areas of student outcomes: (a) improved student achieve-

Spotlight on Student Success is an occasional series of articles highlighting findings from The Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) that have significant implications for improving the academic success of students in the mid-Atlantic region. For more information on LSS and on other LSS publications, contact The Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success, 9th Floor, Ritter Hall Annex, 13th Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA, 19122; telephone: (800) 892-5550; e-mail: lss@vm.temple.edu. Also visit our World Wide Web site at http://www.temple.edu/departments/LSS.

ED031444

ment, particularly for those at the margins of the achievement distribution; (b) patterns of active learning and teaching processes that are consistent with the research base on effective classroom practices; and (c) positive attitudes by students and the school staff toward their school learning environment. Findings to date show a general pattern of more positive perceptions about classrooms/schools in the LCP schools as compared to students in comparison schools. Students in LCP schools tend to perceive better and more constructive feedback from teachers about their work and behaviors, a higher level of aspiration for academic learning, better academic self-concept, and clearer rules for behaviors and class/school operations. The data also show a positive pattern of changes in math and reading scores, and that the LCP students outperformed comparison school students on both subjects.

Other noteworthy findings include the observation that families and the community became increasingly active in a wide range of school activities and in the decision-making process. As a result of their involvement, for example, a school-based health clinic was put in place by the community and the local children's hospital in one school. As part of a health initiative in another LCP school, the school planning team arranged for monthly visits from a local hospital's van to bring medical teams to provide immunization, checkups, and follow-up care to children and families.

These findings are especially encouraging, particularly in light of the school profiles of the LCP schools. All three schools are located in inner-city neighborhoods plagued by extreme poverty, inadequate medical care, and limited education and employment opportunities. It is significant that much was accomplished within the first two years of initial implementation, suggesting the feasibility of scaled-up implementation of LCP as an iimprovement strategy for increasing the capacity for education in inner cities.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Many students have difficulty achieving learning success and need better help than they are now receiving. If all students are to successfully complete a basic education through equal access to a common curriculum, the way in which schools respond to the diversity of student needs must undergo major conceptual and structural changes. Improvement efforts must take into consideration the learning context and require collaboration and coordination among professionals on a scale never previously attempted. Several policy and practical implications can be drawn from the work of the LCP; they are briefly discussed below.

- Program implementation must be a shared responsibility of all stakeholder groups at the grassroots level to address the multiple co-occurring risks prevalent in the lives and learning of many inner-city children and youth, who are placed further at risk by the inadequate education they receive. However, schools must be the primary focus as we attempt to find ways to improve the capacity for education in the inner cities. For surely other efforts will come to naught if we fail to offer powerful forms of education in the schools.

- Innovative programs evolve in stages of development, growth, and change. Procedures found useful in one city can be helpful in initiating similar programs elsewhere. Although quite impressive advances were demonstrated in a relatively short period at the LCP participating schools, much attention must be paid to charting a course of action to bring to scale what works in the unique situations of the three initial implementation sites. Strong efforts are needed to provide support for forums to share ideas on solutions to thorny problems, to identify promising practices, to analyze how programs are implemented, and to evaluate outcomes. This is yet another level of collaboration currently lacking that would surely contribute to sustained improvements.

- Few educational reforms have generated the same level of ground-swelling support as the comprehensive approach to coordinated educational and related services for children as a focus for achieving significant improvements in student learning. A variety of programs are being created across the country to implement coordinated approaches to reach out to children and youth at greatest risk. Nearly all such programs seek to develop feasible ways to build connecting mechanisms for effective communication, coordinated service delivery, and mobilization of the latent energies and resources of communities. Despite the fact that the research base and practical know-how in implementing school-community connection programs require application of knowledge and expertise from many disciplines and professions, no system is in place to communicate and share the growing body of related research findings and innovative development experiences among practitioners and others who play major roles in influencing the conditions and processes of education and health and human services delivery. This lack of access to information about program features and their implementation and evidence of replicable and beneficial effects has been voiced as a major source of concern by LCP implementors as they enter into ground-breaking collaborative ventures.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Comer, J. P. (1985, September). The School Development Program: A nine-step guide to school improvement. New Haven, CT: Yale Child Study Center, Yale University.

Rigsby, L. C., Reynolds, M. C., & Wang, M. C. (Eds.). (1995). School-community connections: Exploring issues for research and practice. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Wang, M. C. (Ed.). (1992). Adaptive education strategies. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Wang, M. C., & Gordon, E. W. (1994). Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wang, M.C., Oates, J., & Weishew, N. (1995). Effective school response to student diversity in inner-city schools: A coordinated approach. Education and Urban Society, 27(4), 484-503.

If you would like to receive a copy of these publications, or would like other information, please contact the LSS Information Services Coordinator at (800) 892-5550.